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Conference Abstract

Managers of Australasian Herbarium Collections (MAHC): A MARK of Curation Excellence

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Abstract

Managers of Australasian Herbarium Collections (MAHC) is a sub-committee of the Council of Heads of Australasian Herbaria (CHAH) and provides advice and recommendations pertaining to the management of herbarium collections. It was formed in 2009 based initially on Australian herbaria, and later incorporated New Zealand herbaria. MAHC currently has 18 member institutions representing both government funded, and university based herbaria, and includes both the largest (National Herbarium of Victoria -

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MEL) and smallest collections (Macquarie University - MQU) in the region. The group meets in person annually, and holds regular conference phone calls throughout the year.

MAHC has proved itself to be a very cohesive committee, despite time, sizing, staffing, and funding differences. It prides itself in being inclusive, cooperative, collegiate, collaborative and supportive. It has a strong mentor approach toward early career collections managers or those new to collections management. The group has a healthy forward planning outlook, developing, promoting and implementing collections management policy, recommendations, guidelines and standards. This cohesion has resulted in a toolkit of resources that are freely available and strives for a unified world class best practice herbarium curation. Some of these universally agreed tools include templates, biosecurity documents, disaster mitigation and preparation for Nagoya Protocol implementation for Australia and New Zealand.

MAHC supports new international initiatives and manages the day to day running of programmes such as the Global Plants Initiative project imaging all vascular type specimens housed in Australasia. MAHC collaborates with CHAH and the data sub-committee, HISCOM (Herbarium Information Systems Committee), for continued improvements in sharing digital data and specimens via the Australasian Virtual Herbarium (AVH https://avh.chah.org.au/) and Atlas of Living Australia (ALA https://www.ala.org.au/) services.

This talk will use examples to highlight the effectiveness and success of a unified group in: developing standard practice in curation, incorporating improved curation procedures, and its ability to be agile, responding to incidents at an international level.

Keywords

Australia, New Zealand, herbarium, collections management, MAHC, talk

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